

It is probable that the spread of this disease in epidemic form is very largely due to the neglect of isolating the patient until the germ has disappeared from throat and sputum.

A comparatively small number of samples of blood are sent to the laboratory for examination for the parasite of malaria. Most of the samples received are free from the parasite. This seems to indicate that physicians either use quinine before taking the samples or else send only from cases of obscure continued fevers which are not malarial.

The laboratory receives a very few demands for the Widal test for typhoid. The Widal test is easily made, but for trustworthy results the culture of the typhoid bacillus used to agglutinate must be fresh and virulent. To procure and keep up such cultures requires too much labor for the trifling demand for this work, so at present we decline to make the Widal test.

The laboratory receives an occasional freak sample supposed to contain the "germs" of cancer or scarlet fever. While the biologist is always willing to give a brief answer to a courteous request, with our facilities already overtaxed, physicians must understand that no samples requiring special research can be accepted. The germs (if germs there be) of cancer and scarlet fever are not known to science. It is not the business of our laboratory to search for unknown germs.

With present facilities and lack of sufficient financial support, there is little prospect of broadening the scope of our work. With increased means the laboratory might, with great benefit, add to its present lines of work biological diagnosis of rabies and of pneumonia. It might also undertake to test the qualities of the drugs and medicines usually prescribed by physicians. Those States which have investigated the quality of drugs sold, especially in the smaller towns, have found a most alarming condition of affairs. For example: Massachusetts has found that practically all the "diabetic flour" sold in that State at about fifty cents per pound was little better than ordinary whole wheat flour. This is one of the most despicable impositions practiced upon a credulous and helpless public. All the medicinal wines were found to be spurious and most aromatics below standard strength. Unless the physician can depend upon the purity and strength of the drugs he prescribes, no amount of skill will avail to save his patient, and the reputation of the physician must suffer. This is a very serious matter and should have the earnest consideration of the Board of Health as well as of practicing physicians.

It is necessary to call your attention and the attention of the physicians of the State to the insufficient and precarious support of the biological laboratory. There seems to be a loose impression among the profession that the whole power and wealth of the State is back of the laboratory and that the amount of work to be had for the asking is practically unlimited. The fact is that the State does